

# The Porter

St. Conrad Fraternity, Annapolis, MD  
Secular Franciscan Order – July 2017  
<http://stconradannapolis.sfousa.org/>

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## Volunteers

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The Porter deadline for the June issue is August 11. Please send news, prayer requests, poems, or interesting things that you think other members may enjoy to: Joan Faltot, 8217 Grainfield Rd, Severn, MD 21144, or send by email.



### Fraternity Meeting

**Saturday, July 15, 2017**  
**St. John the Evangelist, 607 Ritchie Hwy., Severna Park, MD 21146**  
**8:30 Mass -- Church. Meeting 9:15 – Youth room**

### Refreshments



Glen Burnie/Pasadena. Annapolis/Eastern Shore will be next, so please arrange to take the supplies home, restock if necessary. *Please remember to bring your own cup!*

### Program

Br. Kip Ledger - *Renewing the Rule in our Hearts* – “**Homework**” reminder alert. You are asked to read the Rule before the meeting and the talk by Pope Benedict on St. Bonaventure previously emailed to you, which has been included in this copy of *The Porter* starting on page 3.

### Liturgy

Annapolis/Eastern Shore. Liturgy of the Hours: Memorial of St. Bonaventure. Please mark your book ahead of time. We will use the Doctors of the Church which also uses the Common of Pastors.

<u>1-Vol</u>	<u>4-Vol</u>	
#176	p. 1768	Hymn (Doctors): Rise up, O Men of God
p. 1426	p. 1750	Antiphons: (Pastors)
p. 707	p. 688	Psalms: Sunday, Week I pg.
p. 1436	p. 1769	Reading, Responsory, Canticle of Zechariah (Doctors)
p. 1436	p. 1769	Intercessions (Pastors)
p. 1194	p. 1537	Closing prayer (Proper of Saints)

### Prayer Requests



*For our sick and/or homebound members:* (Please help us update this list.)  
Teresa Shenk’s father, Kelli Eye (Susan Greif’s niece), Joan’s husband, Bill Kvetas for recovery from surgery. Mandy (Kathleen Sievers’ niece), Teri Egan, Br. Walt Robb OFM Cap, Michael Benso (Laura’s husband), Emily McGeedy’s son Matthew, Denise Miente, Jude Dodge, Kathy Duffy’s daughter Lynne, Sister Mater Mundi (missionary in Mexico), Capuchin Bishop William Fey, Msgr. Jeremiah Kenney

<b>Birthdays</b>	Pat Tyrrell – 7/24 Teresa Shenk – 7/25	Kathy Brady – 7/28 Judge Dodge – 7/29	Sandy Horvath – 7/29
<b>Profession Anniversaries</b>	Brigid Cobb – 08/13/1983		
<b>Treasury</b>	Common Fund balance is \$806.72.		
<b>Outreach</b>	<p><b>Lighthouse Shelter Lunches:</b> Next sandwich-making will be on Thursday, July 20th at 9:30 a.m., at home of Joan Kvetkas. Contact Denise if you plan to come.</p> <p><b>Phoenix Academy:</b> No backpacks till September. Money collected will be used for their food bank and to purchase fresh fruit and veggies for the July and August community “farmers’ market”</p>		
<b>Council Meeting</b>	Monday, August 7, 9:30 am at the Tyrrell’s home		
<b>Upcoming Events</b>			
<b>July 21-23</b>	<p><b>SECULAR FRANCISCAN CONFERENCE:</b> The Development of the Franciscan Person          PRESENTER: Fr. David B. Couturier, O.F.M., Cap.          St. Bonaventure University, 3261 West State Road, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778  <a href="http://www.sbu.edu/academics/schools/franciscan-studies/summer-2017-conferences">http://www.sbu.edu/academics/schools/franciscan-studies/summer-2017-conferences</a></p>		
<b>July 27-30</b>	<p><b>Animate Peace Gathering (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Conference).</b> Renaissance Hotel, St. Louis Missouri. Addition information at <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/jpic4ofs/home">https://sites.google.com/site/jpic4ofs/home</a></p>		
<b>Sun Sept 17 1-4 pm</b>	<p><b>Multi-Fraternity Regional Picnic</b> at the Shrine of St. Anthony, Ellicott City, sponsored by St. Joseph of Cupertino fraternity. You are welcome to attend the noon Mass in the Chapel. Hamburgers, hotdogs, and bottled water will be provided. Please bring a side dish/drink and, if you wish, a lawn chair. We will poll the fraternity in early September, so the host fraternity can plan food for appropriate numbers.</p>		
<b>October 6-8</b>	<p><b>Formation Directors Weekend</b>          October 6-8. Loyola Retreat House, Faulkner, MD</p>		

## COMMUNITY



**Minister’s Minute:** Dear Brothers and Sisters of Penance,

This month, I offer a prayer composed by St. Bonaventure, which he suggests be prayed after receiving Communion.

*Pierce, O most Sweet Lord Jesus, my inmost soul with the most joyous and healthful wound of your love, with true, serene, and most holy apostolic charity, that my soul may ever languish and melt with love and longing for you, that it may yearn for you and faint for your courts, and long to be dissolved and to be with you.*

Grant that my soul may hunger after you, the bread of angels, the refreshment of holy souls, our daily and super-substantial bread, having all sweetness and savor and every delight of taste; let my heart ever hunger after and feed upon you, upon whom the angels desire to look, and may my inmost soul be filled with the sweetness of your savor; may it ever thirst after you, the fountain of life, the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, the fountain of eternal light, the torrent of pleasure, the richness of the house of God.

May it ever compass you, seek you, find you, run to you, attain you, meditate upon you, speak of you, and do all things to the praise and glory of your name, with humility and discretion, with love and delight, with ease and affection, and with perseverance unto the end.

May you alone be ever my hope, my entire assurance, my riches, my delight, my pleasure, my joy, my rest and tranquility, my peace, my sweetness, my fragrance, my sweet savor, my food, my refreshment, my refuge, my help, my wisdom, my portion, my possession and my treasure, in whom may my mind and my heart be fixed and firmly rooted immovably henceforth and forever. Amen. In Christ & St. Francis, Pat

## FORMATION

At the July fraternity meeting, Br. Kip Ledger will present *Renewing the Rule in our Hearts*. You are asked to read the Rule before the meeting and the talk by Pope Benedict on St. Bonaventure previously emailed to you, which has been reprinted below... in case you lost your email.

### **Saint Bonaventure (3)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This morning, continuing last Wednesday's reflection, I would like to study with you some other aspects of the doctrine of St Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. He is an eminent theologian who deserves to be set beside another great thinker, a contemporary of his, St Thomas Aquinas. Both scrutinized the mysteries of Revelation, making the most of the resources of human reason, in the fruitful dialogue between faith and reason that characterized the Christian Middle Ages, making it a time of great intellectual vigour, as well as of faith and ecclesial renewal, which is often not sufficiently emphasized. Other similarities link them: Both Bonaventure, a Franciscan, and Thomas, a Dominican, belonged to the Mendicant Orders which, with their spiritual freshness, as I mentioned in previous Catecheses, renewed the whole Church in the 13th century and attracted many followers. They both served the Church with diligence, passion and love, to the point that they were invited to take part in the Ecumenical Council of Lyons in 1274, the very same year in which they died; Thomas while he was on his way to Lyons, Bonaventure while the Council was taking place.

Even the statues of the two Saints in St Peter's Square are parallel. They stand right at the beginning of the colonnade, starting from the façade of the Vatican Basilica; one is on the left wing and the other on the right. Despite all these aspects, in these two great Saints we can discern two different approaches to philosophical and theological research which show the originality and depth of the thinking of each. I would like to point out some of their differences.

A first difference concerns the concept of theology. Both doctors wondered whether theology was a practical or a theoretical and speculative science. St Thomas reflects on two possible contrasting answers. The first says: theology is a reflection on faith and the purpose of faith is that the human being become good and live in accordance with God's will. Hence the aim of theology would be to guide people on the right, good road; thus it is basically a practical science. The other position says: theology seeks to know God. We are the work of God; God is above our action. God works right action in us; so it essentially

concerns not our own doing but knowing God, not our own actions. St Thomas' conclusion is: theology entails both aspects: it is theoretical, it seeks to know God ever better, and it is practical: it seeks to orient our life to the good. But there is a primacy of knowledge: above all we must know God and then continue to act in accordance with God (Summa Theologiae, 1a, q. 1, art. 4). This primacy of knowledge in comparison with practice is significant to St Thomas' fundamental orientation.

St Bonaventure's answer is very similar but the stress he gives is different. St Bonaventure knows the same arguments for both directions, as does St Thomas, but in answer to the question as to whether theology was a practical or a theoretical science, St Bonaventure makes a triple distinction he therefore extends the alternative between the theoretical (the primacy of knowledge) and the practical (the primacy of practice), adding a third attitude which he calls "sapiential" and affirming that wisdom embraces both aspects. And he continues: wisdom seeks contemplation (as the highest form of knowledge), and has as its intention "ut boni fiamus" that we become good, especially this: to become good (cf. Breviloquium, Prologus, 5). He then adds: "faith is in the intellect, in such a way that it provokes affection. For example: the knowledge that Christ died 'for us' does not remain knowledge but necessarily becomes affection, love (Proemium in I Sent., q. 3).

His defense of theology is along the same lines, namely, of the rational and methodical reflection on faith. St Bonaventure lists several arguments against engaging in theology perhaps also widespread among a section of the Franciscan friars and also present in our time: that reason would empty faith, that it would be an aggressive attitude to the word of God, that we should listen and not analyze the word of God (cf. Letter of St Francis of Assisi to St Anthony of Padua). The Saint responds to these arguments against theology that demonstrate the perils that exist in theology itself saying: it is true that there is an arrogant manner of engaging in theology, a pride of reason that sets itself above the word of God. Yet real theology, the rational work of the true and good theology has another origin, not the pride of reason. One who loves wants to know his

beloved better and better; true theology does not involve reason and its research prompted by pride, "sed propter amorem eius cui assentit [but is] motivated by love of the One who gave his consent" (Proemium in I Sent., q. 2) and wants to be better acquainted with the beloved: this is the fundamental intention of theology. Thus in the end, for St Bonaventure, the primacy of love is crucial.

Consequently St Thomas and St Bonaventure define the human being's final goal, his complete happiness in different ways. For St Thomas the supreme end, to which our desire is directed is: to see God. In this simple act of seeing God all problems are solved: we are happy, nothing else is necessary.

Instead, for St Bonaventure the ultimate destiny of the human being is to love God, to encounter him and to be united in his and our love. For him this is the most satisfactory definition of our happiness.

Along these lines we could also say that the loftiest category for St Thomas is the true, whereas for St Bonaventure it is the good. It would be mistaken to see a contradiction in these two answers. For both of them the true is also the good, and the good is also the true; to see God is to love and to love is to see. Hence it was a question of their different interpretation of a fundamentally shared vision. Both emphases have given shape to different traditions and different spiritualities and have thus shown the fruitfulness of the faith: one, in the diversity of its expressions.

Let us return to St Bonaventure. It is obvious that the specific emphasis he gave to his theology, of which I have given only one example, is explained on the basis of the Franciscan charism. The "Poverello" of Assisi, notwithstanding the intellectual debates of his time, had shown with his whole life the primacy of love. He was a living icon of Christ in love with Christ and thus he made the figure of the Lord present in his time he did not convince his contemporaries with his words but rather with his life. In all St Bonaventure's works, precisely also his scientific works, his scholarly works, one sees and finds this Franciscan inspiration; in other words one notices that his thought starts with his encounter with the "Poverello" of Assisi. However, in order to understand the practical elaboration of the topic "primacy of love" we must bear in mind yet another source: the writings of the so-called Pseudo-Dionysius, a Syrian theologian of the 6th century who concealed himself behind the pseudonym of Dionysius the Areopagite. In the choice of this name he was referring, to a figure in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 17: 34). This theologian had created a liturgical theology and a mystical

theology, and had spoken extensively of the different orders of angels. His writings were translated into Latin in the ninth century. At the time of St Bonaventure we are in the 13th century a new tradition appeared that aroused the interest of the Saint and of other theologians of his century. Two things in particular attracted St Bonaventure's attention.

1. Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of nine orders of angels whose names he had found in Scripture and then organized in his own way, from the simple angels to the seraphim. St Bonaventure interprets these orders of angels as steps on the human creature's way to God. Thus they can represent the human journey, the ascent towards communion with God. For St Bonaventure there is no doubt: St Francis of Assisi belonged to the Seraphic Order, to the supreme Order, to the choir of seraphim, namely, he was a pure flame of love. And this is what Franciscans should have been. But St Bonaventure knew well that this final step in the approach to God could not be inserted into a juridical order but is always a special gift of God. For this reason the structure of the Franciscan Order is more modest, more realistic, but nevertheless must help its members to come ever closer to a seraphic existence of pure love. Last Wednesday I spoke of this synthesis between sober realism and evangelical radicalism in the thought and action of St Bonaventure.

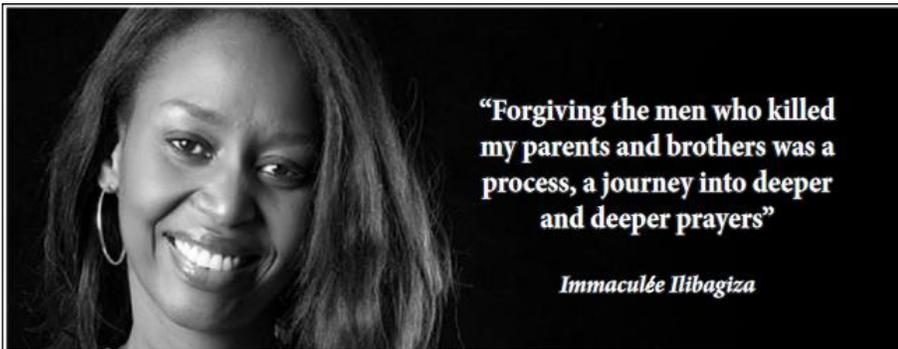
2. St Bonaventure, however, found in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius another element, an even more important one. Whereas for St Augustine the intellectus, the seeing with reason and the heart, is the ultimate category of knowledge, Pseudo-Dionysius takes a further step: in the ascent towards God one can reach a point in which reason no longer sees. But in the night of the intellect love still sees it sees what is inaccessible to reason. Love goes beyond reason, it sees further, it enters more profoundly into God's mystery. St Bonaventure was fascinated by this vision which converged with his own Franciscan spirituality. It is precisely in the dark night of the Cross that divine love appears in its full grandeur; where reason no longer sees, love sees. The final words of his "The Journey of the Mind into God", can seem to be a superficial interpretation an exaggerated expression of devotion devoid of content; instead, read in the light of St Bonaventure's theology of the Cross, they are a clear and realistic expression of Franciscan spirituality: "If you seek in what manner these things occur (that is, the ascent towards God) interrogate grace, not doctrine, desire, not understanding; the groan of praying, not the study of reading... not light, but the fire totally inflaming, transferring one into God" (VII 6). All this is neither anti-

intellectual nor anti-rational: it implies the process of reason but transcends it in the love of the Crucified Christ. With this transformation of the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, St Bonaventure is placed at the source of a great mystical current which has greatly raised and purified the human mind: it is a lofty peak in the history of the human spirit.

This theology of the Cross, born of the encounter of Pseudo-Dionysius' theology and Franciscan spirituality, must not make us forget that St Bonaventure also shares with St Francis of Assisi his love for creation, his joy at the beauty of God's creation. On this point I cite a sentence from the first chapter of the "Journey": "He who is not brightened by such splendours of created things is blind; he who does not awake at such clamours is deaf; he who does not praise God on account of all these effects is mute; he

who does not turn towards the First Principle on account of such indications is stupid" (I, 15).

The whole creation speaks loudly of God, of the good and beautiful God; of his love. Hence for St Bonaventure the whole of our life is a "journey", a pilgrimage, an ascent to God. But with our own strength alone we are incapable of climbing to the loftiness of God. God himself must help us, must "pull" us up. Thus prayer is necessary. Prayer, says the Saint, is the mother and the origin of the upward movement - "sursum actio", an action that lifts us up, Bonaventure says. Accordingly I conclude with the prayer with which he begins his "Journey": "Let us therefore say to the Lord Our God: "Lead me forth, Lord, in thy way, and let me step in thy truth; let my heart be glad, that it fears thy name' " (I, 1).



**Thursday, August 3, 2017** at 7:00  
\$10 admission purchased in advance at [www.stjoefullerton.org](http://www.stjoefullerton.org)  
St. Joseph Parish (Fullerton),  
8420 Belair Road, Baltimore, MD 21236  
410-256-1630  
Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Book signing, fellowship & refreshments follow.

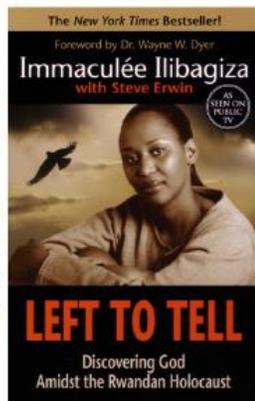
## How can we experience true faith and forgiveness?

### *Left to Tell...A Story of Faith, Hope and Forgiveness*

Hiding in a tiny bathroom with seven other women as machete-wielding killers hunted for her, Rwandan genocide survivor, Immaculée Ilibagiza, experienced a terror few can imagine.

During these 91 days of confinement, anger and resentment were destroying Immaculée's mind, body and spirit. Come and listen and reflect on how prayer transformed her life from fear to courage, hatred to love, and gave her the ability to forgive those who murdered her family.

You will not want to miss this award-winning author's life-changing, inspirational story of faith, hope and forgiveness.



**Friday, Aug 4, 2017 at 7:00 – FREE!!**  
A voluntary collection will be taken up.  
St. Louis Roman Catholic Church,  
12500 Clarksville Pike  
Clarksville, MD 21029  
410-531-6040

**EWTN**

**Wednesday, August 23, 10am**  
Thu, August 24, 11am  
Check your local EWTN listings for air times of Immaculée's interview.

## Update on the Dakota Access Pipeline from Earthjustice.org and *The Atlantic*

<http://earthjustice.org/library/dakota%20pipeline>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/06/dakota-access-standing-rock-sioux-victory-court/530427/>

On January 24, 2017, the White House issued a memorandum to the Secretary of the Army to review and approve construction in an expedited manner, thereby nullifying the hold that President Obama had placed on the project.

On March 28, 2017, Earthjustice filed a suit for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Dakota Access, LLC challenging several authorization issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. You can read all 56 pages of the filing at

<http://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/files/Memo-ISO-SRSTs-Mtn-for-PSJ.pdf>

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, James Boasberg, D.C. district court, said that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers failed to perform an adequate study of the pipeline's environmental consequences when it first approved its construction. In a 91-page decision, the judge cited the Corps' study of "the impacts of an oil spill on fishing rights, hunting rights, or environmental justice" as particularly deficient, and he ordered it to prepare a new report on its risks. Standing Rock Sioux are assured certain hunting and fishing rights in their most recent treaty with the U.S. government. Many of the tribe's members rely on fish or hunted game as a steady food source. Before approving the pipeline, the Corps did not study whether an oil spill at the pipeline would kill most of the river's fish. It also did not report on whether the chemicals used to clean up a spill could poison local game, rendering them unfit for human consumption.

The court did not, however, order the pipeline to be shut off until a new environmental study is completed—a common remedy when a federal permit is found lacking. Instead, Boasberg asked attorneys to appear before him again and make a new set of arguments about whether the pipeline should operate.

Boasberg's second complaint with the Corps was on similar methodological grounds. According to federal regulation, every major project constructed near a poor community, community of color, or Native American reservation must be studied on environmental-justice grounds. The Corps shrugged off many of these rules, arguing that no affected group lived within a half-mile of the pipeline route. The pipeline runs .55 miles north of the reservation.

However, the judge also ruled that the Corps did not violate administrative law when it quickly approved the pipeline earlier this year. He has also previously ruled that the Dakota Access pipeline does not infringe on Standing Rock's cultural heritage, nor does it damage the religious practice of another group of Sioux, the Cheyenne River Tribe.

## Lunch Anyone? Light House Bistro

The Lighthouse Bistro is a self-sustaining and 'revenue-generating social enterprise' to support the ongoing workforce development and housing programs at The Light House. It also contributes to the revitalization and economic development of the West Street Corridor. This project serves multiple purposes including:

### Advanced Culinary Training Center

- Full Teaching Kitchen
- Real-Work Opportunities for graduates of our culinary arts job training program,
- Custom Catering
- Lunch Contracts
- Prepared Meals
- Signature Items

### The Light House Bistro

- 50 Seats
- Coffee Bar
- Open to the public for lunch and dinner

### Permanent Supportive Housing

- Four apartments for former residents of The Light House on the second floor



Opens at 7am Daily (Closed on Tuesdays)  
Dine-In Service for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner  
Coffee Bar and Grab-n-Go

202 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 424-0922

[info@annapolislighthouse.org](mailto:info@annapolislighthouse.org)  
[www.lighthousebistro.org](http://www.lighthousebistro.org)

## Captain's Log – Posted Friday, July 04, 2008

[\[http://acaptainslog.blogspot.com/2008/07/fallen-soldier\\_04.html\]](http://acaptainslog.blogspot.com/2008/07/fallen-soldier_04.html)

Editor's note: Mary Henry sent me an email with the following story. On the end of it was the typical request of a chain letter requesting to send the story to my friends and not to break the chain. Being a long-term, jaded computer user, I take delight in breaking chain letters regardless of the promises or threats stated. However, I decided to track this story down to see if it was true or an urban legend. The story is true and is from a pilot's blog. Below is the story as it originally appeared in the pilot's blog in 2008. Grab a tissue before reading.

*Captain's Log is the true story of a commercial airline pilot. I have logged more than 20,000 hours over 25 years. I have fought a war, delivered humanitarian relief, supported the U.S. President on visits to foreign lands, flown over 100,000 people like you, safely, to destinations large and small. I want to share normal, boring, odd, hilarious, and seat-of-the pants flying experiences. I thank you for your trust in me and humbly tell you my story.*

### Fallen Soldier

Another 4th of July is here and all across the nation, millions of us will celebrate in thousands of different ways. Our military members around the world will miss out on hometown celebrations, instead, performing the duties assigned to them. This story is in honor of them.

As a commercial pilot, I too see the effects of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Last month I showed up to start a trip and was approached by a gate agent. "Captain, good morning, I wanted to inform you that we have H.R. on this flight", she said. H.R. stands for human remains. "Are they military?", I asked. "Yes", she said. "Is there an escort?", I asked. "Yes, I already assigned him a seat", she said. "Would you please tell him to come to the flight deck, you can board him early", I said.

A short while later, a young army sergeant entered the flight deck. He was the image of the perfectly dressed soldier. He introduced himself and I asked him about his soldier. The escorts of these fallen soldiers talk about them as if they are still alive and with us. "My soldier is on his way back to Virginia", he said. He proceeded to answer my questions, but offered no words on his own. I asked him if there was anything I could do for him and he said no. I told him that he has the toughest job in the military and that I appreciated the work that he does for the families of our fallen soldiers. The first officer and I got up out of our seats to shake his hand. He left the flight deck to find his seat.

We completed our preflight checks, pushed back and performed an uneventful departure. About 30 minutes into our flight I received a call from the lead flight attendant in the cabin. "I just found out the family of the soldier we are carrying, is onboard", he said. He then proceeded to tell me that the father, mother, wife

and 2-year-old daughter were escorting their son, husband, and father home. The family was upset because they were unable to see the container that the soldier was in before we left. We were on our way to a major hub at which the family was going to wait 4 hours for the connecting flight home to Virginia. The father of the soldier told the flight attendant that knowing his son was below him in the cargo compartment and being unable to see him was too much for him and the family to bear. He had asked the flight attendant if there was anything that could be done to allow them to see him upon our arrival. The family wanted to be outside by the cargo door to watch the soldier being taken off the airplane. I could hear the desperation in the flight attendants voice when he asked me if there was anything I could do. "I'm on it", I said. I told him that I would get back to him.

Airborne communication with my company normally occurs in the form of email like messages. I decided to bypass this system and contact my flight dispatcher directly on a secondary radio. There is a radio operator in the operations control center who connects you to the telephone of the dispatcher. I was in direct contact with the dispatcher. I explained the situation I had onboard with the family and what it was the family wanted. He said he understood and that he would get back to me.

Two hours went by and I had not heard from the dispatcher. We were going to get busy soon and I needed to know what to tell the family. I sent a text message asking for an update. I saved the return message from the dispatcher and this following is the text.

“Captain, sorry it has taken so long to get back to you. There is policy on this now and I had to check on a few things. Upon your arrival a dedicated escort team will meet the aircraft. The team will escort the family to the ramp and planeside. A van will be used to load the remains with a secondary van for the family. The family will be taken to their departure area and escorted into the terminal where the remains can be seen on the ramp. It is a private area for the family only. When the connecting aircraft arrives, the family will be escorted onto the ramp and planeside to watch the remains being loaded for the final leg home. Captain, most of us here in flight control are veterans. Please pass our condolences on to the family, thanks.”

I sent a message back telling flight control thanks for a good job. I printed out the message and gave it to the lead flight attendant to pass on to the father. The lead flight attendant was very thankful and told me, “You have no idea how much this will mean to them.” Things started getting busy for the descent, approach and landing.

After landing, we cleared the runway and taxied to the ramp area. The ramp is huge with 15 gates on either side of the alleyway. It is always a busy area with aircraft maneuvering every which way to enter and exit. When we entered the ramp and checked in with the ramp controller, we were told that all traffic was being held for us. “There is a team in place to meet the aircraft”, we were told. It looked like it was all coming together, then I realized that once we turned the seat belt sign off, everyone would stand up at once and delay the family from getting off the airplane. As we approached our gate, I asked the copilot to tell the ramp controller we were going to stop short of the gate to make an announcement to the passengers. He did that and the ramp controller said, “Take your time.”

I stopped the aircraft and set the parking brake. I pushed the public address button and said, “Ladies and gentleman, this is your captain speaking. I have stopped short of our gate to make a special announcement. We

have a passenger on board who deserves our honor and respect. His name is private XXXXXX, a soldier who recently lost his life. Private XXXXXX is under your feet in the cargo hold. Escorting him today is army sergeant XXXXXXX. Also onboard are his father, mother, wife, and daughter. Your entire flight crew is asking for all passengers to remain in their seats to allow the family to exit the aircraft first. Thank you.”

We continued the turn to the gate, came to a stop and started our shutdown procedures. A couple of minutes later I opened the cockpit door. I found the two forward flight attendants crying, something you just do not see. I was told that after we came to a stop, every passenger on the aircraft stayed in their seats, waiting for the family to exit the aircraft. When the family got up and gathered their things, a passenger slowly started to clap their hands. Moments later more passengers joined in and soon the entire aircraft was clapping. Words of “God Bless You, I’m sorry, Thank you, Be proud, and other kind words were uttered to the family as they made their way down the aisle and out of the airplane. They were escorted down to the ramp to finally be with the loved one lost.

I never did see the family. Another soldier died, another family grieved and we did what we could. That is the way it works sometimes. I get a call from the cabin and we work as a team to do what we can. That day everybody from the flight crew, to the operations center, to the 184 passengers onboard, we did what we could. Many of the passengers disembarking thanked me for the announcement I made. They were just words, I could say them over and over again, but nothing I say will bring that soldier back. I respectfully ask that all of you reflect on this day and the sacrifices that millions of men and women have made to ensure our freedom, safety, and the right to live a good life.

Be safe,  
FlyGuy. (aka Richard Rodriguez)